

*can I do find that his comments majorly my own reaction to much of the draft. Some parts of it are opaque, contain too much detail, and have a whining tone. Not all of the draft is affected, however. Can, you could remedy much with your own pencil.*

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Chairman, NIC  
Vice Chairman, NIC

FROM : Harry Cochran *HC*

SUBJECT : Comments on SNIE 56-88: "The Philippines: Problems and Prospects for the Aquino Govt"

1. I recommend that major revisions be made before this draft is distributed for coordination. The paper is excessively diffuse and undigested. It attempts to cover far too much ground for a SNIE. As a result, its basic message--that the Philippines will be able to muddle through until 1992 without crippling political or economic upheavals--is lost in a confusing mass of detail.

2. There is another problem. This draft is suffused with a strong prescriptive tone. In fact, much of it reads more like a policy paper than an intelligence estimate. There is a mother-hen flavor of anxious hand-wringing that should be excluded from national intelligence. The second Key Judgment, for example, worries that "Manila does not have the time to move haphazardly or haltingly in addressing the country's deep-seated problems." The fifth K.J. says, in effect, that Filipinos cannot escape disaster without aggressive US tutelage: "We believe that left to its own devices, the government's implementation of planned military, political, and economic reform will fall well short of performance levels needed to contain the threats to stability."

3. I suggest that all the prescriptive material and advice be deleted and that a relative handful of significant topics (no more than 5 or 6) be selected for in-depth but highly distilled assessment and projection.

4. The drafters should give more careful thought to evaluating the government's performance and capabilities in the context of a real world political system and culture. It strikes me that the third K.J.'s test of "steady progress" toward democratic politics, a loyal and effective military, and alleviation of poverty and injustice is little more than purple rhetoric. More care also is needed in treating the question of national leadership. On the one hand, the draft complains that Aquino has failed to provide the "dynamic political leadership" that is "probably the most important ingredient in improving the Philippines' chances." On the other hand, it acknowledges (para. 26) that "Aquino's diffuse power base is probably insufficient to tackle the enormous problems facing her."

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5. Similar superficiality afflicts the treatment of the insurgency problem. Paras. 15 - 17 are highly prescriptive and very thin on the crucial relationship between a fragmented, chaotic political system and the failure to develop an effective counterinsurgency program. It's hardly adequate to observe that "We are encouraged by Manila's discussion of a regional approach...."

6. Finally, I would urge a more thoughtful treatment of implications for the US. Para. 39 notes that "Manila's ambivalence about its relationship with the US is likely to prove a major obstacle in discussing military and economic assistance, making it difficult for Washington and Manila to decide what is Washington's appropriate role in the Philippines." I agree that "ambivalence" is the key element, but the opacity of this language is not easy to penetrate.